



## THE ONE YEAR BIBLE USER'S GUIDE

*Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.*

PSALM 119:105

*The One Year Bible* is divided into daily readings designed to guide you through the entire Bible in a year. But the arrangement doesn't take you straight through from Genesis to Revelation. Instead, each day you will find a portion of the Old Testament and the New Testament, plus short readings from Psalms and Proverbs. These four daily readings are grouped on consecutive pages, giving freshness and diversity to each day's reading experience. Many people have tried to read through the entire Bible in a year, but they quickly become frustrated when they get stuck in harder passages. This reading plan has helped millions of readers, including those who were previously frustrated, to successfully complete their reading of the entire Bible. And reading through the Bible will ensure that you will spend significant time engaged with God's Word.

Time spent genuinely engaged with God's Word has the potential to change your life. "The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires" (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible isn't just a book of human wisdom. It comes from God himself, and in it he gives us the wisdom and knowledge needed to live a life of faith. "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Time spent in the Scriptures, in a very real sense, is time spent with God. There is no better place in this world for us to hear from God. The Bible is a special gift, but a gift we often leave on the shelf—unopened and unread. And as we open it and read its pages, we are opening a door to a relationship with the Author. He's waiting there to speak to us, with the help of his ever-present Spirit. He gave us the Scriptures because he wants us to hear

from and know him. Approach your reading each day with this knowledge and expectation.

## ENGAGING MORE DEEPLY WITH SCRIPTURE

In *The One Year Bible*, you are encouraged to read through the entire Bible in a year, and its structure provides a systematic daily plan for this. Most readers do their daily reading silently, often in a single sitting. However, since many of the readings are fairly long, it is easy to get distracted and to start “reading just to finish.” If this is the case for you, you may find it helpful to slow down to engage more fully in the listening process.

Below is a list of concrete practices or tools that should help you engage more deeply with Scripture. (Since everyone is different, not all of these practices may work for you. And some of the practices work better for longer passages, as opposed to single verses, and vice versa.) Use these tools to help you engage with God’s Word more deeply.

**PRACTICE 1—READ IT ALOUD:** This practice will slow you down and allow you to focus. Reading aloud takes about twice as long as silent reading. It also allows you to encounter God’s Word twice—through both your eyes and ears—leading you to a more nuanced interaction with the text. (This is especially useful as you approach a longer passage.) As you read aloud, you could try to read the text interpretively—add color to your expression to help you more completely take in and express the message. You could even dramatize a scene. And if others are around, don’t be afraid to share the experience with them!

**PRACTICE 2—COPY IT:** Take out a pen and paper and copy a verse or passage of particular interest. If you are a visual learner, this should help you focus on the text more intensely. It will also force you to slow down even more and approach it phrase by phrase, helping you savor the text as you would a meal of many courses. If you have some talent with your pen, express the meaning of the text with different kinds of scripts and ink colors. This will help you focus on the meaning in greater detail. Typing the text into your computer and formatting the text creatively could accomplish the same sort of thing. If your rendering turns out really well, frame it or send it to friends to encourage their reflection.

**PRACTICE 3—SUMMARIZE IT:** Take a journal or computer and write a summary for each reading in this Bible with just a single sentence. This could be a simple content summary, or perhaps a summary of what God said to you through the passage. Reading with this practice can help you stay focused and also help you create a personal tool for Bible review. As you

finish reading a Bible book, summarize the entire book's core message in a sentence or paragraph. Then at the end of the year, try to summarize the message of the whole Bible. From your perspective, what is the Bible's unified message?

**PRACTICE 4—PARAPHRASE IT:** Take out a pen and paper, or start up your computer, and put some verses into your own words. Try to capture all the important parts of the passage without leaving anything out. This will help you pay attention to the details and to the rich meanings of the words. Drink in the text, digest its meaning, and write it again from the unique perspective God has given you. Don't worry about the word order; focus on the message. You will likely find that this leaves you with nuggets of wisdom to take away and to continue to think about.

**PRACTICE 5—DIVIDE IT:** This practice is somewhat the opposite of summarizing the broad strokes of a passage. To divide a text, choose a particular sentence that is especially meaningful to you, like "The LORD is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). Highlight each word of the sentence successively, and read it over and over again. This will allow you to see the verse from varied angles.

**THE** LORD is my shepherd.  
The **LORD** is my shepherd.  
The LORD **IS** my shepherd.  
The LORD is **MY** shepherd.  
The LORD is my **SHEPHERD**.

As you do this, you will likely see truths in the text that you were blind to before.

**PRACTICE 6—PERSONALIZE IT:** Embrace or claim Scripture personally by taking a verse or passage that clearly applies to you and replacing the nouns or pronouns with your own name. This will drive home the truth that God is speaking about you and to you. The verse that includes the text we just divided above might read, "The LORD is Susan's shepherd. Susan has all that she needs." You might also personalize it this way for a friend, your spouse, or your children.

**PRACTICE 7—PRAY IT:** Many passages are helpful for guiding our prayers. They remind us of what is true and what is important to God. We can use these reminders as prayer prompts. Again, take the verse we looked at above. It might inspire a prayer like this: "Lord, you have reminded me that you are my Shepherd and that you can provide all that I need. As one of your sheep, I confess that I often don't follow you very closely. I'm

often one of the lost sheep—one of those you need to search for in stormy weather and carry home. I can see that if I followed you more closely, I'd also be much closer to all that you have to offer me. The unmet needs I'm always complaining about would be better met if I just stayed near to my Shepherd. And I suppose sometimes I wander away looking to satisfy my wants rather than my real needs. Dear Shepherd, help me to stay close to your loving care and protection. Forgive my tendency to wander. Amen.”

**PRACTICE 8—MEMORIZE IT:** Putting Scripture to memory is the likely result of many of these other practices. For many of us, if we copy or read a verse again and again, we will soon know it by heart. To begin memorizing a text, that is the best place to start. Read or copy a text three times a day for an entire month and then begin to recite it aloud for yourself on a regular basis. Then, if the appropriate opportunity arises, recite it for others. (Remember to learn the reference, too, so you can more easily locate it.) The psalm writer reminds us of why Scripture memorization is so important: “I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11).

**PRACTICE 9—SHARE IT:** God's Word is good news, whether it comes in a story or parable, an account of one of Jesus' miracles, a psalm of praise, a promise of hope, or a wise proverb. When you've read something helpful, thought provoking, or inspiring, share it. As you do, you'll find that the message becomes more real for you too. If it's a story, retell it to someone in your own words. Try to capture all the details. If it's a short promise or proverb, email it to a friend, post it on an announcement board or refrigerator, carve it into a piece of wood to hang on a wall, bring it up for discussion with friends over coffee, or tweet it for anyone who might be watching. If you've heard from God and it means something to you, take the time to share it.

**PRACTICE 10—LIVE IT:** It's not just important to read and listen to God's Word. We also need to find ways to put it into practice. (Keeping this in mind as you read will also help you to focus.) We are reminded of this in the book of James: “Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves” (James 1:22). As you reflect on God's Word, conclude your time by thinking up ways to live it out. What can you put into action today?

## OTHER WAYS TO USE THE ONE-YEAR READING PLAN

Though *The One Year Bible* has led millions of readers through the Bible in one year, its arrangement is equally useful for guiding you through the

Bible in two years, or even longer. If you feel too rushed or want to spend more time on each day's selections, here are a few other suggestions:

**THE SPLIT ONE-YEAR PLAN.** Schedule time in both the morning and evening. Read the New Testament and Psalms selections in the morning and the Old Testament and Proverbs selections in the evening.

**THE TWO-YEAR PLAN.** During the first year, read the Old Testament and Proverbs selections. Then during the second year, read the selections from the New Testament and Psalms.

**THE THREE-YEAR PLAN.** Read the Old Testament selection the first year, the New Testament selection the second year, and the Psalms and Proverbs selections during the third year.

**THE WORDS OF PRAISE AND WISDOM PLAN.** Read the Psalms and Proverbs selections for each day. This will take you through the Psalms twice and Proverbs once during the year, giving you words of praise and wisdom to live by each day.

You need not limit yourself to these suggested plans. The arrangement of *The One Year Bible* makes it easy to devise any number of Bible reading plans to meet your particular needs.

